Memory Against History: Collective Amnesia and the Logic of Recurrence

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Introduction

History is commonly perceived as the cumulative memory of human experience. The modern world possesses an unprecedented density of historical documentation: wars, revolutions, social collapses, and political catastrophes are recorded in detail not only by historians, but by novelists, filmmakers, and philosophers. The contemporary individual has access to more knowledge about the past than any human being in earlier epochs. Yet this immense expansion of the archive has not produced a comparable expansion of collective self-awareness. Historical patterns of fear, aggression, and destruction continue to recur.

The persistence of such recurrence indicates that the crisis is not informational but psychological. Historical memory exists, but it is not internalized. Civilization remembers externally, while consciousness forgets internally.

The central theoretical foundation of this study lies in Gustave Le Bon's analysis of crowd psychology. At the end of the nineteenth century, Le Bon formulated one of the most rigorous and unsettling propositions in the study of collective behavior: historical experience, even when accompanied by catastrophe and civilizational collapse, does not fundamentally alter the nature of the crowd. According to his theory, the psychological mechanisms governing mass behavior remain essentially constant across time. Experience may temporarily shock or redirect collective behavior, but it does not educate it in a durable sense. Each generation returns to the same emotional and instinctive baseline, and therefore the lessons of the past must be relearned through

renewed suffering.

This distinction between individual and collective consciousness is crucial. The individual is capable of learning, reasoning, and adaptation. The crowd, by contrast, regresses. Under emotional contagion and suggestion, collective consciousness becomes less rational than the individuals who compose it. It acts through impulses, myths, and symbols rather than reflection or evidence. In this sense, history fails not because information is lacking, but because collective psychology is structurally resistant to learning.

The twentieth-century dystopian literary tradition, especially in the works of George Orwell, anticipated this condition at the level of individual consciousness. In *1984*, the destruction of memory becomes the central instrument of power. In *Fahrenheit 451*, books disappear not only through censorship but through the psychological discomfort that sustained thought produces in a distracted society. These narratives suggest that the erosion of historical awareness is not solely political; it is cognitive. The human being, immersed in permanent stimulation, ceases to think historically.

A further dimension of this problem lies in the rhythm of attention and memory within the individual mind. Modern consciousness is discontinuous. Large portions of life pass without entering reflective awareness. What remains are episodic peaks of memory separated by extended intervals of routine and passivity. Forgetting thus becomes not merely a failure of memory but a form of psychological self-protection. Experiences that threaten one's sense of coherence and dignity are retained as facts but excluded from the structure of identity.

The same mechanism operates at the level of society. Collective consciousness suppresses traumatic and degrading episodes of history because their

acknowledgment undermines its own legitimacy and cohesion. Historical repetition therefore arises not only from an inability to reflect, but from a structural reluctance to preserve knowledge that destabilizes the continuity of self-understanding.

George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* illustrates this oscillation vividly. Its protagonist lives within the repetition and inertia of everyday existence. Yet at certain moments fragments of the past return, restoring a temporary sense of coherence and perspective. These awakenings are brief and fragile; they do not transform life, and are followed by renewed immersion in habitual routine. Such intermittence reflects the broader anthropological tendency: sustained reflection requires continuity and silence, while the natural state of consciousness gravitates toward adaptation and forgetting.

In the digital environment this tendency becomes intensified. Continuous stimulation fragments awareness, compresses the temporal horizon of thought, and undermines the capacity for historical memory. Under such conditions, the archive of civilization survives externally while remaining psychologically absent.

From this perspective, the persistence of historical repetition should not be interpreted solely as a failure of political systems or institutions. It is rooted in the invariance of human psychology itself. Progress in knowledge does not entail progress in reflection. The crowd does not learn; the individual forgets; and history therefore returns.

Chapter I

Psychological Oblivion and the Survival Imperative

Human consciousness does not preserve the past as a neutral archive. It preserves only what can be psychologically endured. The more traumatic an experience is, the less likely it is to remain integrated within the structure of identity. This applies equally to the individual and to society. Memory is not lost by accident; it is removed in the name of psychological survival.

At the level of the individual, this mechanism appears as a gradual separation between factual memory and self-perception. Experiences of humiliation, fear, dependency, or social collapse do not vanish entirely, yet they are no longer recognized as belonging to the present self. The mind retains fragments, but it dissolves continuity. The subject remembers that something happened, but he no longer remembers himself within it. In this sense, memory does not fail — identity does.

The same logic governs collective consciousness. A society does not forget because it lacks historical data. It forgets because it cannot endure the moral or existential implications of its own past. Collective memory, like individual memory, is filtered by psychological necessity. The episodes that destabilize the internal image of social coherence are suppressed or excluded. What cannot be assimilated is eventually erased.

This selective oblivion is not merely political. It is anthropological. Civilizations are inclined to preserve only those historical narratives that support their self-understanding and their sense of legitimacy. Events that expose vulnerability, disorder, or failure are displaced into silence. Over time, entire periods of collective experience can disappear from reflective consciousness, even if they remain technically documented.

The rhythm of everyday life accelerates this process. Repetition, routine, and material adaptation dull the emotional intensity of memory. When life returns to

normality, consciousness instinctively seeks stability rather than reflection. The mind adapts by minimizing the psychological weight of the past. What once appeared as catastrophe becomes gradually abstract. What cannot be emotionally sustained is eventually treated as if it had never been lived.

This is why history tends to repeat itself. The past is not consciously rejected; it is psychologically uninhabited.

One of the clearest examples of this phenomenon is the disappearance of entire social realities from collective awareness. Issues such as immigration, social displacement, famine, epidemic disease, wars, or natural disasters may define the lived experience of a generation, yet they later vanish from the active memory of society. What remains is a simplified symbolic version of events, detached from the actual psychological depth of experience.

Immigration offers a particularly instructive case. Forced migration, mass displacement, and the trauma of leaving one's homeland alter the psychological structure of millions of lives. Yet societies often suppress the full memory of such processes. The topic becomes politically sensitive, morally uncomfortable, or incompatible with the prevailing narrative of stability. As a result, what was once lived as crisis is transformed into silence. Memory survives as statistics, but not as consciousness.

The same applies to wars. Collective memory tends to preserve heroic myths and symbolic victories, while omitting the degradation, fear, and internal fragmentation that accompany actual conflict. The emotional truth of war is too destabilizing for social identity. Therefore, it is replaced with abstraction. The next generation inherits slogans, not memory.

Natural disasters follow a similar pattern. Earthquakes, floods, epidemics, and civilizational breakdowns are remembered in their external dimension, but not

in their psychological one. The suffering that shaped collective behavior is not integrated into future reflection. It remains outside the structure of social self-awareness, and therefore does not prevent repetition.

In all such cases, forgetting functions as a form of collective self-protection. Stability requires psychological simplification. What would threaten social cohesion is removed from memory, not because it is false, but because it is intolerable.

This leads to a paradox at the core of modern civilization. Humanity possesses an enormous external archive of historical events, yet its internal psychological archive is fragmented and unstable. Knowledge exists, but it does not live within consciousness. The crowd does not learn, because learning would require remembering.

The digital environment intensifies this condition. Continuous stimulation fragments attention and compresses the temporal horizon of thought. In such a context, memory loses continuity. The individual no longer experiences time as a historical flow, but as a sequence of isolated present moments. When the structure of consciousness itself becomes discontinuous, historical reflection becomes nearly impossible.

Thus, repetition is not simply a political or historical phenomenon. It is rooted in the psychological architecture of survival. The human being, whether as an individual or as a collective, remembers only what does not threaten the continuity of life. What threatens stability is erased, and what is erased inevitably returns.

For this reason, the prevention of recurrence cannot rely on the crowd's experience. It depends on the rare capacity of individual consciousness to preserve memory against the natural impulse to forget. Only where memory is

endured rather than erased can historical repetition be meaningfully resisted. In this sense, oblivion is not the opposite of memory. It is its silent precondition.

Extended Analytical Section Literary Testimony and the Erasure of Catastrophic Memory

The phenomenon of historical forgetting is not limited to political censorship or collective denial. It is embedded within the very structure of lived experience. Literature, when examined not as fiction but as psychological evidence, demonstrates that the suppression of memory is a recurring condition of human survival.

The prologue of Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* provides one of the most precise literary articulations of this condition. Written in the aftermath of the First World War, it captures not the heroic dimension of conflict, but the psychological exhaustion that follows catastrophe. The text begins with the persistence of casualty lists — the long administrative echo of a war that has formally ended. Yet, as Aldington observes, the living gradually cease to read these lists. They do not do so because the war has become irrelevant. They do so because memory itself has become unbearable.

The statement that "the living must protect themselves from the dead" reflects a psychological imperative rather than a rhetorical device. It expresses the idea that memory, if it is too heavy, threatens the continuity of life. The twentieth century, in Aldington's words, had "lost its spring with a vengeance." In this context, forgetting becomes not a weakness, but a functional necessity. Survival requires emotional reduction.

This literary insight aligns with the broader argument that collective psychology

does not retain the full weight of traumatic experience. The dead are remembered symbolically, but not psychologically. Their presence is gradually removed from the field of reflection in order to restore a sense of normality. What remains is a simplified and socially manageable version of the past. Aldington's description of George Winterbourne — a young officer whose death is quickly absorbed and forgotten — illustrates the fragility of individual memory within the collective framework. The tragedy is acknowledged, yet it does not persist as a structural element of consciousness. The individual vanishes into the anonymity of the archive. This reflects a universal psychological pattern: societies cannot live in a permanent state of mourning. They transform suffering into abstraction.

The erasure of memory therefore emerges not as a deliberate falsification of history, but as an adaptive mechanism of consciousness. What is too painful to integrate becomes externalized and eventually detached from the identity of the present generation.

The study of this text is essential for understanding the internal dynamics of historical amnesia. It demonstrates that forgetting is not always imposed from above. It is produced from within. The crowd seeks stability, and stability requires a narrowing of memory.

This narrowing extends beyond war. Entire domains of collective experience can disappear from psychological awareness. Mass migration, social displacement, famine, epidemic disease, and natural disasters may define the lived reality of a particular epoch, yet they later vanish from the internal narrative of society. What persists are only institutional or symbolic references, stripped of emotional continuity.

The digital environment magnifies this tendency. Continuous stimulation

shortens the span of attention and replaces historical reflection with immediate adaptation. Under such conditions, the archive of civilization becomes externally accessible while remaining internally absent. The individual is surrounded by history, yet he does not live within it.

Thus, Aldington's prologue should be read not as a literary ornament, but as a clinical observation about the psychology of memory. It shows that the mind preserves only what it can endure. The rest is surrendered to oblivion.

The Poetic Epilogue as a Model of Historical Forgetting

The decision to conclude *Death of a Hero* with a poetic epilogue is neither stylistic nor decorative. It is structural. By returning to the image of Troy long after its destruction, Aldington transforms the historical narrative into a universal psychological model.

In the epilogue, the surviving men are no longer warriors but aging witnesses of their own past. Their memories persist, yet they have lost their intensity and their social relevance. What once constituted the central reality of their lives has become distant, fragile, and almost unreal. The catastrophe has not been preserved as knowledge. It has been reduced to a fading recollection within individual consciousness.

The presence of a younger generation in the same scene is decisive. The youth does not share the historical burden of the past and expresses open indifference toward it. For him, the names of fallen heroes and the memory of war are not a living experience but an obsolete and intrusive inheritance. The distance between generations becomes, therefore, a psychological boundary beyond which historical memory does not naturally pass.

Through this symbolic contrast, Aldington illustrates the inevitable rhythm of collective forgetting. The living do not deny the catastrophe; they simply move beyond it. What threatens psychological stability is excluded from the active field of consciousness and becomes irrelevant for future behavior. The ruin of Troy ceases to instruct because it no longer lives in memory. It survives only as a myth.

In this sense, the fall of Troy functions as a timeless representation of historical recurrence. Every civilization experiences its own collapse, preserves it for a short period as traumatic awareness, and then gradually erases it in the name of survival. The act of forgetting is not accidental. It is necessary for psychological continuity.

Thus, the poetic ending of the novel does not close the story. It exposes the underlying logic of history itself: catastrophe is remembered only until life demands that it be forgotten, and what is forgotten inevitably returns.

Chapter II

Orwell and the Discontinuity of Historical Consciousness

The problem of historical forgetting does not exist only at the level of collective psychology. It is rooted in the internal structure of individual consciousness itself. George Orwell's literary work provides one of the clearest representations of this inner dynamic. His novels and memoirs demonstrate that the erosion of historical awareness is not merely a political or cultural failure, but a psychological inevitability emerging from the rhythm of lived experience.

In *Coming Up for Air*, Orwell depicts a protagonist whose life is absorbed by the repetitive and muted flow of everyday existence. The past appears not as a

stable foundation of identity, but as a fragile and intermittent presence. Memory returns in brief flashes, usually triggered by accidental sensory associations, and just as quickly dissolves into the grey inertia of daily routine. This oscillation between recollection and absence illustrates a fundamental anthropological condition: reflection is possible, but it is not continuous. It survives only in moments, while the dominant structure of life tends toward adaptation and forgetting.

The protagonist's attempt to reconnect with his childhood environment does not restore meaning. Instead, it reveals the irreversibility of psychological and historical time. The remembered world no longer exists in its former reality; it survives only as a subjective reconstruction. In this sense, memory does not preserve continuity. It exposes its own fragmentation. The individual recognizes that the coherence of his life is not built upon an unbroken internal archive, but upon selective, emotionally filtered remnants of the past.

This structure of intermittence has broader implications. If individual consciousness itself is incapable of sustaining stable historical reflection, then the collective, composed of such individuals, cannot be expected to internalize and preserve the weight of experience. The crowd's psychological non-learning is thus mirrored in the internal instability of the individual mind.

Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* extends this argument from the domain of fiction into direct autobiographical testimony. The text does not merely describe the Spanish Civil War; it reveals how the lived intensity of political and military conflict is gradually overtaken by the practical demands of survival. The immediacy of experience yields to the necessities of food, shelter, and movement. Life resumes its own pace, and that pace has no inherent interest in preserving reflection.

In this context, the war does not become meaningless. It becomes psychologically unsustainable. What was once lived as a total reality is transformed into a distant, partial memory, filtered by exhaustion and the need to continue existing. The historical event remains, but the human mind withdraws from it. The living protect themselves not only from the dead, but from the unbearable density of their own past.

The continuity between these two works is essential. Together, they demonstrate that the erosion of memory is not imposed externally. It arises internally, through the ordinary mechanics of consciousness and the biological imperative to endure. Reflection demands silence, time, and psychological energy. The everyday demands of life undermine all three.

Thus, Orwell's analysis does not contradict the theory of collective psychology. It deepens it. The crowd forgets because it is built from individuals whose awareness is already discontinuous. History returns not because it is unknown, but because the psychological capacity required to retain it has been structurally exhausted.

In the modern digital environment this exhaustion becomes permanent. Continuous distraction fragments attention, accelerates the disappearance of memory, and shortens the temporal horizon of thought. Under such conditions, the individual does not lose history; he loses the ability to inhabit it.

Memory, Habit, and the Loss of Historical Time

Orwell's contribution to the problem of historical consciousness lies not in his political conclusions, but in his method of observation. He shows that forgetting is not an abstract phenomenon. It is a gradual dissolution of lived experience

under the pressure of habit and routine.

In *Coming Up for Air*, the structure of the narrative itself reflects the psychological condition it describes. The text does not proceed linearly from past to present. It moves in cycles, returning repeatedly to fragments of childhood memory that emerge briefly and then recede. This rhythm mirrors the actual functioning of consciousness. Memory does not operate as an ordered archive; it functions as a series of unstable intrusions into the present moment. The protagonist's recollections are not heroic or tragic. They are ordinary. They concern landscapes, smells, textures, and episodes of quiet domestic life. Yet their return produces a sudden and disproportionate emotional clarity. These moments are not nostalgic decoration. They reveal the fundamental instability of identity: what is not continuously remembered ceases to exist as part of the self.

Orwell therefore portrays consciousness as something structurally fragile. The individual does not forget the past because it has disappeared. He forgets because the present absorbs all available psychological energy. The daily rhythm of life compresses awareness into the immediate field of practical necessity. What lies outside that field becomes silent.

This process does not erase facts. It erases context. The mind retains traces of experience, but those traces are disconnected from the temporal flow of one's own existence. As a result, the past survives not as continuity, but as isolated evidence that one has lived before.

In this sense, the everyday becomes the principal agent of oblivion. Routine dulls the reflective capacity that allows memory to remain active. The more predictable and repetitive life becomes, the less the mind is inclined to preserve what has already occurred. Psychological survival is achieved by narrowing

attention to what is immediately required.

The same logic is evident in *Homage to Catalonia*. Here Orwell documents not only the external events of war, but the internal erosion of meaning that follows prolonged exposure to danger and uncertainty. The individual's perception of history does not deepen under such conditions. It contracts. Survival replaces reflection.

When the protagonist returns to England, the war continues to exist in the archive of his memory, but not in the structure of his present life. What once defined reality becomes psychologically distant. The human mind reorients itself toward stability. In doing so, it abandons the intensity of lived experience. This abandonment is not failure. It is adaptation.

Through these works, Orwell demonstrates that the modern individual lives in a state of temporal fragmentation. The continuity between past and present is not sustained automatically. It requires deliberate mental effort. Without such effort, consciousness gravitates toward simplification and forgetfulness.

This reveals why historical repetition persists. It is not that societies lack information. It is that individuals cannot maintain a stable internal relationship with their own experience. The structure of consciousness itself is incompatible with long-term historical memory.

In the contemporary digital environment, this incompatibility becomes intensified. Continuous sensory stimulation accelerates the erosion of attention and further reduces the mind's capacity for reflective continuity. The archive of civilization grows, while the internal space required to preserve it disappears.

Bradbury and the Cultural Mechanism of Amnesia

Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* provides a complementary cultural perspective on the same psychological process described by Orwell. If Orwell illustrates the fragility of memory within individual consciousness, Bradbury reveals how this fragility becomes institutionalized within society itself.

In Bradbury's narrative, books are not destroyed solely by force. They disappear because sustained thought produces discomfort in a culture that has come to prefer emotional immediacy over reflection. The loss of memory is therefore not merely political. It is civilizational. Society itself begins to reject what would preserve continuity.

This condition mirrors the broader anthropological logic already outlined. The crowd, by its nature, does not learn from the past, and the individual cannot continuously sustain reflective awareness. Bradbury demonstrates what happens when these two tendencies converge: culture evolves toward distraction, and memory becomes psychologically incompatible with daily life.

The world of *Fahrenheit 451* is built upon permanent stimulation. Entertainment replaces introspection. Noise replaces silence. Under such conditions, the individual ceases to inhabit historical time. The archive of civilization is no longer internalized; it is treated as a threat to psychological stability.

Bradbury's vision thus extends the analysis beyond the psychology of forgetting into the structure of modern existence. The problem is not censorship alone. It is the human preference for simplification. Where reflection is abandoned, historical continuity collapses, and the mechanisms of repetition inevitably return.

In this sense, Bradbury's dystopia is not a fantasy about the future. It is a theoretical model of what occurs when the preservation of memory becomes

culturally intolerable

Chapter III

Tolstoy and the Metaphysics of Historical Inevitability

Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* occupies a singular place in the philosophical understanding of history. While it is conventionally categorized as a novel about the Napoleonic Wars, its deeper function is analytical rather than narrative. Tolstoy does not merely depict historical events; he examines the structure of historical movement itself. In doing so, he challenges the prevailing notion that history is shaped by rational decisions, coherent strategies, or the conscious intentions of exceptional individuals. Instead, he presents history as the product of innumerable small actions, emotional impulses, and instinctive reactions of the masses. The resulting picture is not one of heroic agency, but of inevitability.

In Tolstoy's framework, the individual does not stand outside history as its author. He exists within it as one of its particles. Even those figures commonly labeled "great men" — Napoleon, Alexander, Kutuzov — are stripped of their traditional explanatory power. Tolstoy portrays them not as decisive agents, but as symbolic nodes within a larger, impersonal flow. The logic of war, destruction, and recurrence emerges not from their will, but from the inertia of collective human behavior.

This conception aligns directly with the core problem of this study. Historical repetition is not prevented by the accumulation of knowledge, because the psychological mechanisms governing collective action remain constant. Tolstoy's insight lies in demonstrating that what is remembered or written about

the past does not control the direction of history. The archive is external; the impulse that drives events is internal and unconscious.

Tolstoy's rejection of the "great man" theory of history is not ideological but structural. He observes that the true causes of historical change are dispersed among millions of people, each acting under limited perception and immediate necessity. The battlefield becomes a visible expression of this dispersed causality. Orders are given, yet they do not determine the outcome. Plans are drafted, yet they are overtaken by the unpredictable sum of human reactions. What appears as strategy dissolves into instinct, chance, and fear.

In this sense, *War and Peace* illustrates a critical distinction between historical documentation and historical consciousness. Events can be described and analyzed retrospectively, but they are not experienced by those who live through them as coherent or meaningful. The participants of war do not possess the psychological distance necessary for reflection. Their primary aim is survival. Memory, therefore, cannot be preserved in its full weight; it must be simplified.

This simplification is central to Tolstoy's anthropology. The human being, when confronted with the overwhelming scale of war, adapts by narrowing his perception of reality. What cannot be emotionally endured becomes abstract. Thus, history does not fail because facts disappear; it fails because the psychological continuity necessary to retain them collapses.

The everyday life depicted in the novel reinforces this argument. Between battles, characters return to the rhythm of routine and domestic existence. The return is not accidental. It reveals that the mind seeks equilibrium rather than reflection. Even those who have witnessed destruction gradually resume a state of psychological normality. The catastrophe remains external to them; it no

longer lives in their active consciousness.

Tolstoy's analysis implies that historical forgetting is not merely an individual process but a collective necessity. The continuity of social life depends on the ability of society to detach itself from unbearable episodes of its own past. In the absence of such detachment, existence would be psychologically impossible. This is why the fall of cities, the deaths of soldiers, and the ruin of families become part of a distant, impersonal memory. They are acknowledged, yet not internalized.

War, in Tolstoy's depiction, is therefore not a moral drama but a mechanical repetition of human impulses. Fear produces aggression; aggression produces violence; violence produces trauma; trauma is followed by forgetting. The cycle restores stability but eliminates reflection. When stability returns, the same psychological conditions that led to catastrophe re-emerge.

This structure of inevitability does not negate individual responsibility. Rather, it exposes its limits. A single consciousness cannot arrest the collective momentum of millions. Historical recurrence persists because it is grounded not in rational miscalculation, but in the invariance of human nature.

Tolstoy's philosophical chapters within the novel provide a theoretical commentary on this phenomenon. He insists that history cannot be explained through the intentions of rulers or generals. It must be understood through the aggregated behavior of the masses. Such aggregation produces results that no participant fully anticipates or controls. The crowd moves, and the individual follows.

From this perspective, history is not the realm of progress but the realm of repetition. The tragedy lies not in the absence of knowledge, but in the inability of consciousness to preserve it. Humanity lives within the archive of its own

past, yet it cannot inhabit that archive psychologically.

The relevance of Tolstoy's insight becomes even more evident when applied to the contemporary condition. The scale of historical documentation has expanded, but the internal structure of consciousness remains the same. Modern society records everything and internalizes nothing. The psychological mechanisms of survival continue to override the capacity for reflection.

Thus, *War and Peace* stands not simply as a literary monument, but as a philosophical demonstration of why historical memory fails to prevent recurrence. The forces that shape history are collective, instinctive, and emotionally driven. They cannot be educated by experience because they do not retain it.

In Tolstoy's vision, the human being is not the master of history.

He is its medium. And the medium, bound by the necessity to endure, forgets — and therefore repeats.

Tolstoy's Conception of War as Psychological Regression

Tolstoy's analysis of historical movement cannot be reduced to the rejection of heroic agency. It also exposes the psychological nature of war itself. In *War and Peace*, conflict does not elevate the human being; it diminishes him. Under the pressure of mass mobilization and existential threat, individuals become less reflective, less autonomous, and more instinctive. The conditions of war, therefore, do not produce historical learning. They produce psychological regression.

This regression is not limited to the battlefield. It permeates the entire social fabric. Civilian life, administrative structures, and interpersonal relations all

become subordinated to the logic of fear and survival. The individual ceases to exist as a bearer of historical consciousness and becomes a functional element within a collective mechanism. The crowd absorbs him, and in that absorption his capacity for memory dissolves.

Tolstoy's portrayal of soldiers illustrates this principle with particular clarity. The participants of war do not act according to strategic comprehension. They act according to immediate emotional impulse — obedience, panic, anger, fatigue. Their decisions are rarely rational in the analytical sense. They are reactions to a situation that cannot be fully grasped. Thus, war is not only a historical catastrophe; it is a cognitive one. It compresses awareness and fragments identity.

The effect of this compression is visible in Tolstoy's treatment of causality. Battles are described not as the execution of deliberate plans, but as chaotic collisions of human behavior. Even the commanders appear disoriented by the events they nominally control. Orders are issued, yet their practical meaning is lost once they encounter the instability of collective action. This demonstrates that the direction of history is not the product of conscious intention. It emerges from the sum of fragmented psychological responses.

Tolstoy's method therefore reveals an essential paradox. The more violent and decisive an event appears at the level of history, the less coherent it is at the level of consciousness. The individual lives through the catastrophe, but he does not internalize it as knowledge. He survives it as trauma. And trauma, if it is not transformed through reflection, becomes psychologically unbearable and is eventually suppressed.

This suppression is not moral weakness. It is structural adaptation.

Tolstoy suggests that societies after war do not remember the psychological

truth of what has occurred. They retain only a symbolic and simplified version of it. The memory of destruction becomes a narrative of heroism, sacrifice, or necessity. In this way, the crowd protects itself from the destabilizing consequences of its own experience. The result is a stable but historically uninformed collective consciousness.

The characters of the novel repeatedly return to everyday life after episodes of violence. This return is not narrative contrast; it is philosophical argument. It shows that the mind cannot remain in a permanent state of heightened historical awareness. The psychological burden is too heavy. Therefore, daily routine restores equilibrium at the price of memory. Over time, the emotional density of past events is lost, and history becomes external to lived identity.

From this perspective, the fall of cities and the deaths of armies do not transform the psychological architecture of society. They are absorbed, dulled, and finally forgotten. The same conditions that produced conflict gradually re-emerge, and the cycle of history begins anew.

This is the anthropological logic of recurrence.

The Crowd and the Individual: A Shared Structure of Inevitability

Tolstoy's philosophical reflections within *War and Peace* emphasize that history is not governed by deliberate choice. It is governed by mass movement. The crowd does not reason; it reacts. And the individual, when submerged in the crowd, loses the capacity for independent reflection. What appears as collective will is in fact collective instinct.

This directly confirms the psychological model developed earlier in the article. Experience does not educate the mass. The mass returns to the same emotional

baseline after each historical rupture. Thus, the repetition of catastrophe is not an anomaly but an expression of psychological invariance.

Tolstoy's insight here is subtle. He does not argue that people are incapable of thought. He argues that the structure of collective existence overwhelms thought. The scale of social movement exceeds the reflective capacity of the individual. Therefore, history advances not through consciousness, but through momentum. Momentum has no memory.

If the crowd moves without learning, then the preservation of history depends entirely on the individual's ability to withstand memory. Yet Tolstoy's narrative shows that even individuals struggle to do so. The rhythm of life pulls consciousness away from the past. Memory fades not because it is false, but because it is incompatible with survival.

The same mechanism that Aldington describes after the First World War — the need of the living to protect themselves from the dead — is visible in Tolstoy's analysis of the Napoleonic campaigns. The living cannot endure permanent reflection. They choose continuity of life over continuity of memory.

And so history repeats.

War as a Universal Model of Historical Discontinuity

Tolstoy's work suggests that war is not exceptional. It is simply the most visible expression of a deeper human condition: the inability of consciousness to sustain historical continuity. Where there is no continuity, there can be no learning.

The battles in *War and Peace* therefore serve as an empirical metaphor for collective psychology. They show that the archive of events does not become an

archive of understanding. The psychological state of society after catastrophe is not one of reflection but of recovery. Recovery demands forgetting.
Forgetting restores stability.
But it also restores the conditions of repetition.
In this sense, Tolstoy's philosophy of history is not deterministic but anthropological. It does not claim that recurrence is fated by metaphysical law. It claims that recurrence arises from the structure of human consciousness itself.

Conclusion

Memory, Society, and the Structural Logic of Recurrence

The analysis developed in this study leads to a single unifying conclusion: historical repetition is not the consequence of insufficient knowledge, but of the structural limits of human consciousness and collective psychology. The archive of civilization continues to expand, yet the ability of society to internalize and preserve the meaning of its own experience steadily diminishes.
Gustave Le Bon's theory of the crowd establishes the primary anthropological framework. Collective consciousness, in his analysis, does not learn in the same way the individual does. Emotional contagion, instinct, and symbolic simplification dominate the psychology of the mass. Historical catastrophe may shock the crowd, but it does not transform its underlying nature. Each generation returns to the same psychological baseline, and therefore the lessons of the past must be relearned through renewed suffering.
George Orwell's literary analysis of individual consciousness deepens this perspective. The erosion of memory is shown to originate not only in the crowd, but within the structure of the individual mind itself. Reflection appears as

intermittent and fragile, while the dominant condition of consciousness gravitates toward adaptation and routine. The past survives as isolated fragments rather than as a continuous internal narrative. This psychological discontinuity renders sustained historical awareness almost impossible.

Ray Bradbury's cultural dystopia extends the argument into the sphere of modern social organization. Where the crowd cannot learn and the individual cannot endure memory, culture itself evolves toward distraction and simplification. The preservation of knowledge becomes psychologically incompatible with the rhythm of everyday life. In such an environment, historical memory is not simply suppressed; it becomes collectively intolerable.

Richard Aldington's testimony, emerging from the aftermath of the First World War, provides a direct literary articulation of the same survival logic. The living, in order to protect their psychological stability, distance themselves from the dead and from the traumatic weight of the past. Forgetting is thus revealed not as moral failure, but as an inevitable condition of endurance.

Tolstoy's philosophical treatment of history in *War and Peace* completes this chain of reasoning. History is shown to be the product not of deliberate design, but of the aggregated and instinctive movement of the masses. The individual participates in historical events without possessing the capacity to comprehend or internalize them. War becomes the clearest expression of this structure: it is lived as trauma and survived through forgetting, and therefore it returns.

Taken together, these perspectives form a coherent sociological model. The crowd does not learn. The individual forgets. Culture simplifies. Life restores stability at the cost of reflection. The result is a recurring cycle in which humanity remains surrounded by its own archive, yet psychologically separated from it.

The persistence of historical recurrence should therefore be understood not as a temporary failure of institutions or political systems, but as a structural property of human society. Progress in knowledge does not guarantee progress in consciousness. What is not internally endured cannot become a durable foundation for collective behavior.

In this sense, memory stands not as the natural companion of history, but as its fragile opponent. Where memory disappears, repetition becomes inevitable. And where repetition becomes inevitable, the survival of historical consciousness depends entirely on the rare individuals capable of preserving reflection against the pressure of psychological adaptation.

History, therefore, is not merely recorded.

It is continuously lost — and continuously lived again.